CROSSGEN COMICS
20
FEB
DEADSHOT
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MYSTIC
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THUS FAR IN MYSTIC

CIRESS is a world where every aspect of daily life revolves around magic. Presiding over this enchanted globe are the seven major Guilds of magic, which have ruled the planet for centuries. Their key to prosperity was the fact that each Guild Master gained timeless wisdom and sorcerous knowledge from the eternal spirit of their Guild's founding master.

All of that changed on the day Genevieve Villard became Master of the Nouveau Guild. At her Rite of Ascension, a mysterious stranger imprinted a powerful sigil on the palm of Gen's rebellious sister, Giselle. The sigil somehow forced the eternal spirits of all seven Guilds into Giselle! Granted vast magical might, Giselle Villard reluctantly became the most powerful Mystic her world has ever known.

RECENTLY

The Demon Queen, Animora, used her godlike powers to overrun six Guild nations with her magically spawned beasts. She also captured the Masters of the six fallen Guilds and transformed them into monstrous thralls to lead the onslaught. Only the Nouveau Guild stands between Animora and total domination of Ciress, but the Demon Queen has a more personal conquest in mind...

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THE DEMON QUEEN BUSTS OUT OF LIMBO...
...GIANT LIZARDS RUN AMUCK...
...HEADS OF STATE TURN INTO MONSTERS...
...AND ALL BECAUSE I OVERSLEPT?!
GISELLE! THIS IS SERIOUS!

OKAY, GEN -- I'M SORRY I WAS *LATE!* I CAME THE *MINUTE* I FOUND OUT *ANIMORA* HAD ESCAPED!

WHERE *IS* SHE, BY THE WAY?

I DON'T KNOW!

DON'T YOU THINK WE'VE GOT OUR HANDS FULL AS IT IS?

RIGHT. I'LL HANDLE THE *LITTLE* MONSTERS...YOU TAKE CARE OF THE *BIG* ONES...
JUST DON'T *KILL* THEM! THEY'RE STILL *GUILD MASTERS* UNDER THOSE SCALES!
SEVEN SPIRITS, I HOPE SHE REALIZES WHAT'S AT STAKE HERE...
GENERAL CLEMENT, HAVE THE COLOSSI CLOSE RANKS -- IT'S *ALL OR NOTHING* NOW!
AYE, MASTER VILLARD.
I'LL HELP THE TROOPS ON THE GROUND!
YOU KNOW, MARCEAU, IF SHE WASN'T COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF...
YEAH, ME TOO...
GISELLE! LET ME KNOW IF YOU NEED *HELP!*

I'M ⇒UNGH⇐...
I'M FINE, GEN!
FAR FROM IT, GIRL! YOU'LL HAVE TO STRIKE MUCH HARDER IF YOU EXPECT TO DESTROY US!
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED...
⇒ANHH⇐
...I DON'T WANT TO DESTROY ANYONE!
NOT EVEN A RAT LIKE YOU, MAGUS...

"...MURDER IS FOR LOSERS, LIKE THE ONE WHO'S PULLING YOUR STRINGS RIGHT NOW..."
GISELLE'S HOLDING HER OWN RATHER IMPRESSIVELY.
SHE SHOULD BE. THAT'S MOSTLY MY ENERGY SHE'S THROWING AROUND, REMEMBER?
I CAN STILL SEE IT, DARROW: THE RAGE AND THE THRILL IN HER EYES AS SHE DRAINED THE LIFE OUT OF ME.
I'LL RIP THE LITTLE MONKEY APART FOR THAT ONE DAY...
AFTER WE PLAY THIS OUT.
OF COURSE, MY PET.
SO DO YOU THINK SHE'S WORKED UP AN APPETITE YET?
YES, ANIMORA. ENJOY GETTING YOUR HANDS DIRTY. AND DON'T WORRY...
SSSLINK
SHHHWIP
SHLUP
...THERE'S NO WAY I'LL LET DOWN MY END. THE PAYOFF'S JUST TOO GOOD TO MISS.

HEY, SPIRITS! ARE YOU GUYS PAYING ATTENTION?
BECAUSE THESE GUILD MONSTERS AREN'T CUTTING ME ANY BREAKS!
YES, GISELLE, WE ARE WATCHING FROM THE SPIRIT PLANE...

...AND WE ARE EVEN LESS SANGUINE THAN YOU AT THE PROSPECT OF SLAYING OUR INHERITORS, NO MATTER HOW TWISTED THEY'VE BECOME.
THEY MAY LEAVE US WITH NO OTHER OPTION, LeCAVALIER.

GYAHH!
SSSLIISHH
SLAASHH

SHOOT
...WAIT ...NGH... DON'T...
THEY'VE SWITCHED FROM SPELL-CASTING TO MORE DIRECT PHYSICAL ATTACKS!
GISELLE, YOU CAN'T DEFLECT THESE LIKE THE OTHER—
GISELLE!
BAM
THRUNCH
COLOSSUS FIVE TO NOUVEAU LINE COMMAND! WE'VE TAKEN A HIT!
CALM DOWN, LeCAVALIER. IF THEY'RE GETTING PHYSICAL WITH HER, THEN THEY'VE STRAYED INTO MY TERRITORY.
AND WHAT WOULD THE TANTRIC GUILD SUGGEST?
KISSING THE ENEMY? OR PERHAPS A NICE GROUP HUG?
THE SPELL I HAVE IN MIND WOULD REQUIRE GISELLE TO SHUNT MUCH OF HER POWER INTO A TOUGHER BODY...

...PERHAPS ONE OF THE EARTH-GOLEMS THE NOUVEAU ARMY CONJURED TO FIGHT THE GIANT BEASTS?
I THINK I HAVE SOMETHING EVEN BETTER. JUST GIVE ME THE SPELL.
SNAP
COLOSSUS FIVE TO NOUVEAU LINE COMMAND! MOTION-CONTROL GLYPHS ARE OFF-LINE!
REEEEENK
Oh, YEAH...

THIS IS COLOSSUS FIVE AGAIN *NEVER MIND*

WHOOSH

EH?

HAKK-

SLIGHT- YOU BOYS WANNA STEP *INSIDE?*

NO!

SHLUK

SHHH

FRANCOIS, DID YOU HAVE ANY *IDEA* - -

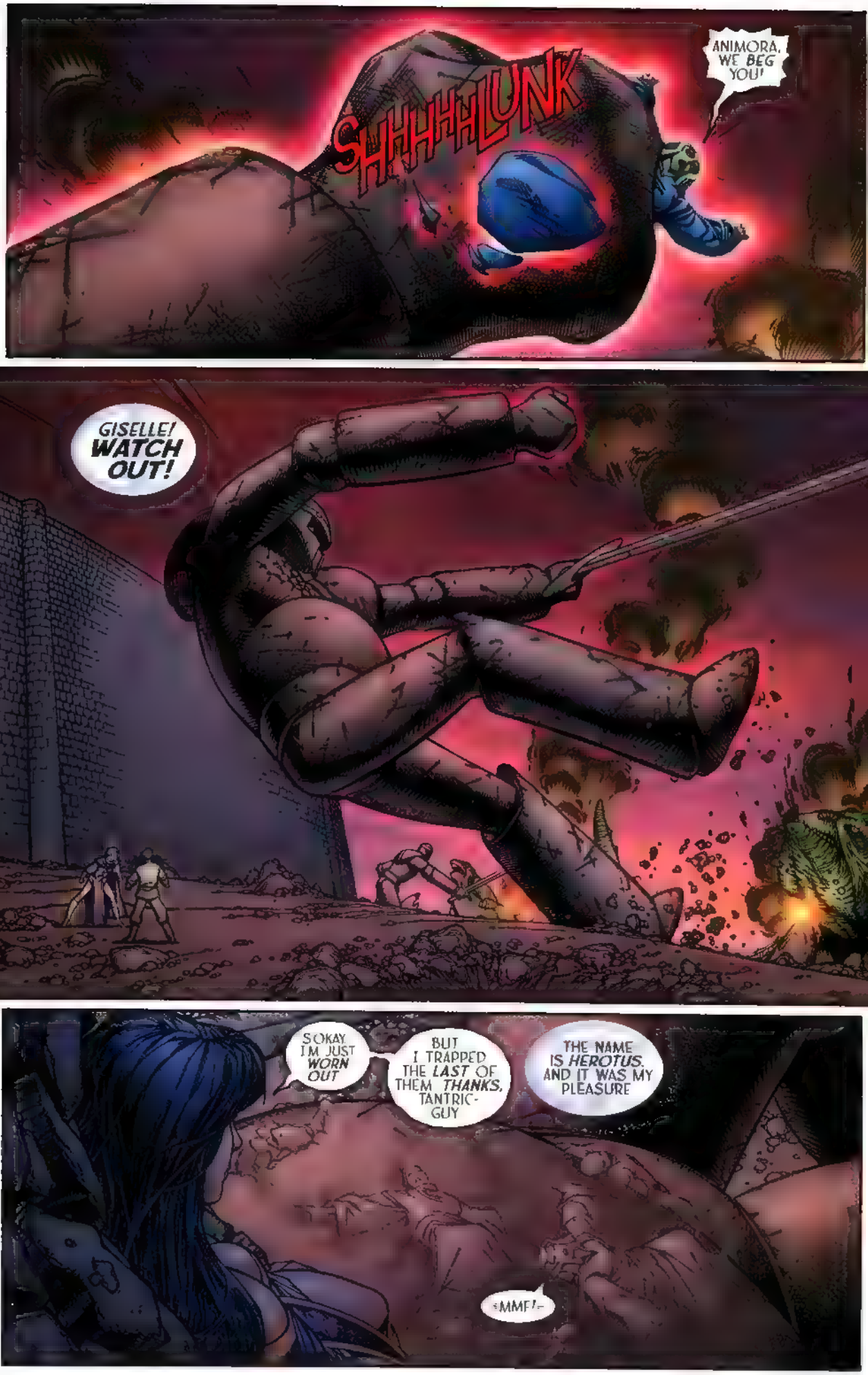
THAT THE GUILD MASTER'S *SISTER* COULD *DO* THIS KIND OF THING? *NONE*

GUESS I WAS TOO BUSY STARING AT HER *LEGS*, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE

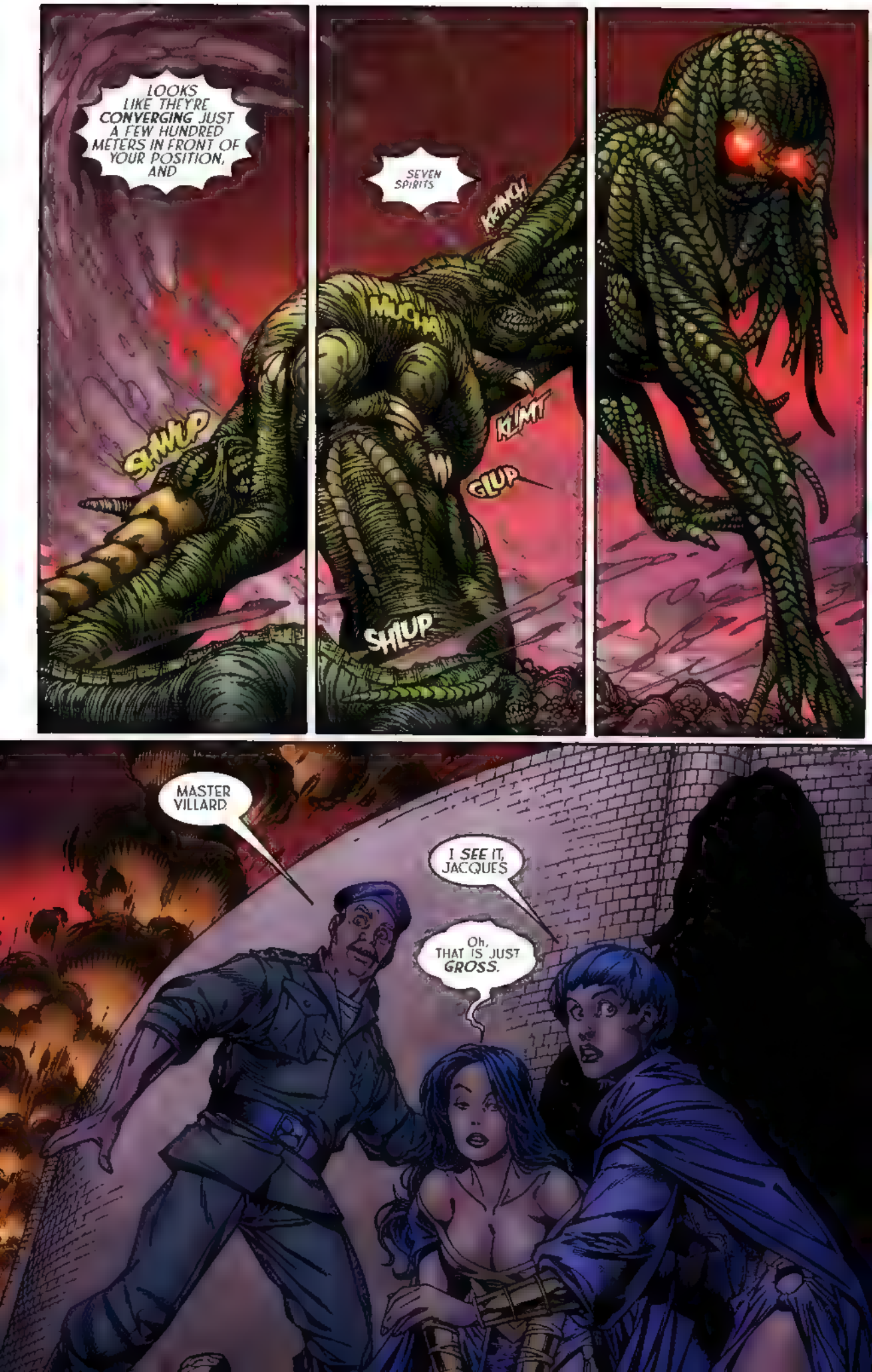
NFFF

GENTLEMEN NFF- IF YOU DON'T *MIND*

SHE CAN HEAR US?!
ANIMORA! HELP US!
SHHHLUK
GENERAL LAURANCE!
MASTER VILLARD
GENEVIEVE
I SERVED YOUR FATHER I'VE KNOWN YOU AND GISELLE SINCE YOU WERE LITTLE GIRLS YOU TURNED OUT TO BE EVERYTHING I EXPECTED BUT TELL ME
WHAT IN THE WORLD HAS YOUR SISTER TURNED INTO?
OUR LAST HOPE


SHHHHLUNK
ANIMORA, WE BEG YOU!
GISELLE! WATCH OUT!
SOKAY. I'M JUST WORN OUT
BUT I TRAPPED THE LAST OF THEM. THANKS, TANTRIC-GUY
THE NAME IS HEROTUS. AND IT WAS MY PLEASURE
-MMF!-

«GROAN»
JUST GLAD I SKIPPED BREAKFAST
EVERYONE, LOOK!
THE CREATURES ARE RETREATING!
LACEWING SQUADRON! CAN YOU CONFIRM?
LACEWING TWO HERE THEY'RE NOT EXACTLY RETREATING, GENERAL


LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE CONVERGING JUST A FEW HUNDRED METERS IN FRONT OF YOUR POSITION, AND
SHLUP
SEVEN SPIRITS
KRNCH
MUCHA
KLMT
GLUP
SHLUP
MASTER VILLARD
I SEE IT, JACQUES
Oh, THAT IS JUST GROSS.

NICE TRICK WITH THAT *STATUE*, GISELLE. VERY IMPRESSIVE
IT'S GOOD TO THINK *BIG* AT A TIME LIKE THIS.

BUT YOU LOOK *TIRED*, MY DEAR
YOU SHOULD'VE JUST *ANNIHILATED* THE MASTERS THE MOMENT I SET THEM UPON YOU INSTEAD YOU *WASTED* ALL THAT TIME AND EFFORT TO *TRAP* THEM
I SUPPOSE YOU SHOULD BE CONGRATULATED FOR SAVING *THEIR* LIVES.
BUT HOW MANY NOUVEAU *SOLDIERS DIED* WHILE YOU WERE BUSY SPARING THE *ENEMY?*
AND NOW YOU HAVE *NOTHING LEFT* TO KEEP ME FROM DOING—
—THIS!
SHRAKA KABOOM!

=NHAA!=
THAT'S THE SPIRIT!
YOU KNOW, YOU HAVEN'T SAID A WORD ABOUT MY HAIR
SO YOU CHANGED YOUR LOOKS
SO WHAT?
INSIDE, YOU'RE STILL THE SAME OLD ROTTEN --

YOU HAVE NO IDEA!
WHULP
KOOM
I'M STRONGER NOW, YOU SEE?
THIS IS THE REAL ME, NOT THE CURSED, WEAKENED THING YOU SUCKED THE LIFE OUT OF BEFORE

AND HOW YOU *LOVED* IT -- FEELING ME WITHER IN YOUR HANDS! WATCHING THE LIGHT FADE FROM MY EYES!
NO! NNH IT FELT *SICK!*
YES, YES. YOUR PRECIOUS *MORALITY* IT MAKES YOU *BETTER* THAN ME, DOESN'T IT?
THAT KIND OF THINKING -- THAT *'RIGHT'* VERSUS *WRONG GIBBERISH* SPLIT MY PEOPLE IN TWO
ANH
SHHRIPPP
GET BEHIND ME
AND IF THERE'S *ONE THING* I'LL MAKE YOU SEE BEFORE YOU DIE --
--IT'S THAT MORALS MEAN *NOTHING* AGAINST *TRUE POWER!*
SPLUT
LAURANCE!
GEN!

SHHRNNKLE
OKAY, ANIMORA--
--YOU WIN
=GASP=

ALL OF THIS...JUST TO GET HERSELF KILLED?
NO... THERE IS ANOTHER CASUALTY HERE...
GISELLE! GET AWAY FROM HER!
...YOU WIN...
...YOU WIN...
...YOU WIN...

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CHANGE IS GOOD

Well, I hope you all enjoyed this issue of MYSTIC, as it is the last issue I am drawing of the regular series, and I wanted it to be as good as possible. I'm moving on to a new position as Vice President of Production Control at CrossGen, and while I will keep drawing, my new job means I can't do it and draw a monthly title at the same time. I have been very gratified at the response MYSTIC has gotten over the past two years by readers, and the vast majority of feedback I've gotten has been very positive.

One thing that has been bothering me as of late, though, is that some people have expressed concern over how the book will fare after I leave. While this apprehension is very flattering, I think readers will be blown away by the new penciler, Fabrizio Fiorentino. Fabrizio is an amazing newcomer who started out in CrossGen's Associate Artist training program and his skills have grown exponentially. He's already done one issue of MYSTIC, #17, and he only gets better from there. Fabrizio is passionate about MYSTIC and brings the enthusiasm and attention to detail that this book needs. I look forward to seeing his art each month in the pages of MYSTIC from here on out. Together with the modestly masterful inker Matt Ryan and the unbelievable colors of original series colorist Andrew Crossley, the art on this book is sure to be spectacular. I know that new series writer Tony Bedard has already impressed many of you the last few months, and I'll be eagerly waiting to see what he'll do with this artistic crew.

I know that MYSTIC has gone through a lot of changes the last few months with writer Ron Marz, inker John Dell, and myself moving on to different projects within CrossGen, but I would ask you all to welcome these changes. CrossGen has from the start been about change, from changing the way creators work together to changing the way a publisher treats its fans. We've bucked the superhero trend and explored themes of science fiction and fantasy when others were afraid to. We've changed from a publisher putting out four books a month to over a dozen, and that growth has allowed new titles like SOJOURN and RUSE to thrive in a market that might not have given them a chance a few years ago. The changes we've forged have all been done with the spirit that we here at CrossGen believe: that we will do only our best, all of the time, on time.

Trust that MYSTIC is in good hands, and come see what those hands are capable of creating next month and every month afterward.

BRANDO

Brandon Peterson

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NIGHT and the CITY
Tony Bedard
Fabrizio Fiorentino
Matt Ryan
Andrew Crossley